



BIBLE STORIES EVERYONE OUGHT TO KNOW

Main and Oklahoma Church of Christ ^ Adult Bible Studies ^ Winter-Spring 2010

March 28, 2010

Temptation of Jesus, Matthew 4:1-13

Getting Started

The Word became flesh and blood and moved into the neighborhood (John 1: 14 *The Message*). The story of Christ's temptations reminds us that not only did Jesus move into the neighborhood, his neighborhood was not some privileged trouble free existence. Instead, it was full of the trials and tribulations common to man.

What's the story?

The Bible tells us that after Jesus' baptism the Spirit led him into the wilderness where he was tempted by the Devil. After 40 days and nights of fasting, Jesus is hungry and the tempter uses this hunger to his advantage. The Devil asks Jesus, "If you are the Son of God, why remain hungry?" Use your powers to get food by turning these stones into bread. Jesus refuses to follow the Devil's suggestion and quotes Deuteronomy 8:3 as the foundation for his choice to fill himself spiritually with God's word.

Next, the Devil takes Jesus to the highest point of the temple. "Cast yourself down," the Devil says, "and nothing will happen." After all, according to the Scriptures angels will protect you (Psalms 91:11-12). Jesus refuses, quoting from Deuteronomy 6:16, "You shall not test the Lord your God."

Finally, the Devil offers to give all the kingdoms of the world to Jesus in return for worship. "Get away from me, Satan," Jesus says to him, "For it is written. Worship the Lord your God and serve him only" (Deuteronomy 6:13). Matthew's account closes with angels ministering to Jesus. However, Luke's account reminds us that we never reach the end of temptation. Luke records that the Devil left him until an opportune time.

In each temptation, the Devil tries to deflect the focus of Jesus ministry away from God's plan. Some of these seem harmless. What could it hurt to eat when you are hungry? Jesus chose a ministry based upon God's will and faith not upon the shortcuts the Devil proposed. The Devil's way would have been popular: fill our physical needs, do sensational acts, establish an earthly kingdom. In many ways, this was exactly the kind of Messiah desired by the people. However, a Messiah of compromise would have been unable to deliver the world from sin. Jesus refused to compromise his purpose.

So, what does this story say about God?

When we are in times of temptation, we know our God understands temptation, because Jesus has been there and experienced temptation. God did not spare Jesus from temptation (Heb.

4:15). Jesus combated temptation using the same weapons we have available today: trust and reliance upon God and Scripture. Furthermore, God has left us with two very important promises. First, that he will never allow us to be tempted beyond our ability, and second, that he will provide a way of escape.

Now, what about our faith?

This story illustrates the choices Jesus made. This period of testing made clear what kind of ministry Jesus would have. He chose to yield his will to God's and to follow God's plan. Satan offered a shortcut to glory, but only God's plan offered humanity a place in glory. The story of Jesus' temptation is a reminder to Christians that our High Priest has a clear understanding of our lives. The next time temptation enters your life, turn to Jesus for strength to withstand and look for God's escape route.

Monday: Matthew 4:1-13, Genesis 3

1. Was there really a possibility that Jesus would yield to the temptations sent by Satan?
2. Often Satan attacks us when we are the most vulnerable. What are some of the times you are most vulnerable to temptation? Take those times to God in prayer and ask for the strength and wisdom you need to overcome temptation.
3. How is the temptation of Adam and Eve similar to and different from that of Jesus?

Tuesday: Matthew 4:1-13, Mark 1:12-13, Luke 4:1-13

1. Compare the three accounts of Christ's temptation. What facts do you learn from Mark and Luke to add to the account in Matthew?
2. Luke 4:13 says the Devil left him until an opportune time. From what you know of Jesus life when were some of these opportune times?

Wednesday: Hebrews 4:15, I John 2:16

1. How do the temptations of Christ compare to the human temptations mentioned in our text?
2. How do you think Matthew and the other writers learned of this story? Was it revealed by the Spirit or told by Jesus?
3. Why did Jesus have to undergo this period of temptation?

Thursday: Psalms 91

1. The Devil quotes Psalms 91. Examine this Psalm; what did the Devil fail to mention that would have contradicted his temptation?
2. How can know Scriptures be an effective tool in fighting temptation?

Friday: I Corinthians 10:13, I Peter 5:8-9, James 4:7

1. We often think of being tempted in our weak areas. How does Satan tempt us with our strengths?
2. What promises has God made to us to help us fight temptation?